THAT WHICH IS CLAIMED:

I claim:

1. A method of processing parcel level detail (PLD) data associated with a parcel that is able to be tracked during shipment comprising:

    providing a plurality of PLD data as input to a computer system;

    determining a tracking number associated with the parcel;

    associating the tracking number with the PLD data;

    storing the PLD data and the tracking number in a record in a parcel data file stored in the computer system;

    extracting at least a subset of the plurality of PLD data from the parcel data file based on an extraction configuration file stored in the computer system;

    retrieving communication data parameters stored in the computer system, the communication data parameters comprising a first destination address;

    transmitting an electronic communication message comprising the extracted subset of the plurality of PLD data and the tracking number to the first destination address; and

    transmitting the parcel data file to a second computer.

2.   The method of claim 1 wherein the tracking number is determined in part by selecting one of a plurality of tracking numbers stored in a tracking number inventory file in the computer system.

3.   The method of claim 1 wherein the tracking number is determined in part by the computer system executing an algorithm producing the tracking number.

4.   The method of claim 1 wherein the tracking number is obtained by requesting a server for the tracking number.

5.   The method of claim 1 wherein the step of transmitting an electronic communication message occurs based on a pre-defined time schedule.

6.   The method of claim 1 wherein the destination address is an email address.

7.   The method of claim 6 wherein the email address is provided by an operator of the computer system.

8.   The method of claim 1 further comprising transmitting a second electronic communication message including the tracking number to a second destination address.

9.   The method of claim 1 wherein extracting at least a subset of the plurality of PLD data from the parcel data file based on an extraction configuration file stored in the computer system includes an business reference number associated with the parcel.

10.   The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of:

establishing a communications link between the computer system and a second computer;

transferring a plurality of tracking numbers from the second computer to the computer system; and

storing the plurality of tracking numbers in an tracking number inventory file in the computer.

11.   A method of processing parcel level detail (PLD) data associated with a parcel that is able to be tracked during shipment comprising:

initiating a shipping application on a local shipping system;

providing a plurality of PLD data as input to a computer system wherein the plurality of PLD data include a destination address, class of service, and weight indication;

obtaining a tracking number;

associating the tracking number with the PLD data;

storing the PLD data and the tracking number in a record in a parcel data file stored in the computer system;

printing out a shipping label including at least a portion of the PLD data and the tracking number;

extracting at least a subset of the plurality of PLD data from the parcel data file based on an extraction configuration file stored in the computer system;

retrieving communication data parameters stored in the computer system, the communication data parameters comprising a first destination address;

transmitting an electronic communication message comprising the extracted subset of the plurality of PLD data and the tracking number to the first destination address; and

transmitting the PLD data file and the tracking number to a second computer.

12.   A computer readable medium storing instructions to be executed on a computer comprising steps for:

receiving parcel level detail (PLD) data as input to the computer system, the PLD data associated with a parcel that is able to be tracked during shipment;

determining a tracking number associated with the parcel;

storing the PLD data and the tracking number in a record in a parcel data file;

extracting a portion of the PLD data;

retrieving a communication data parameter file comprising a user-defined destination address;

transmitting an electronic communication message comprising the portion of the PLD data and the tracking number to the destination address; and

transmitting the parcel data file to a second computer.

13.   The computer readable medium of claim 12 wherein the portion of the PLD data is determined by an extraction configuration file.

14.   The computer readable medium of claim 12 wherein the tracking number is determined by selecting one from a plurality of tracking numbers.

15.   The computer readable medium of claim 12 further comprising the steps of:

prompting a user to enter an address associated with the transmission of the electronic communication message;

receiving the address; and

storing the address in the communication data parameter file.

16.   The computer readable medium of claim 12 further comprising the step of:

formatting a shipping label based in part on the PLD data.

17. An apparatus comprising:

a database storing parcel level detail (PLD) shipping data in a plurality of records, the database further storing tracking number related data from which a tracking number can be derived, the database further storing a first and second destination address;

a processor receiving input comprising PLD data, the processor configured to store the PLD data in the database, the processor further configured to determine a tracking number based on the tracking number related data and store the tracking number in the database, the processor further configured to extract a subset of the PLD data and communicate the subset of PLD data and the tracking number to a second destination address; and

an interface for receiving from the processor the subset of PLD data and the tracking number and transmitting the tracking number over a communications network using the first address indicated by the processor.

18. The apparatus of claim 17 wherein the processor is further configured to communicate the tracking number using the first destination address based on a periodic schedule.

19. The apparatus of claim 17 wherein the processor is further configured to communication the PLD data to the second destination address.

20. The apparatus of claim 17 wherein the tracking number related data stored in the database comprises a plurality of tracking numbers.

21.   The apparatus of claim 17 wherein the database further stores an extraction configuration file used to determine the subset of PLD data to be extracted.